ASTART

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THE STORY BEGINS back in the fall of 1980 in New York City, Jones St, Greenwich Village. While on my monthly haul, I encountered at Robert Wilson's Phœnix Bookshop, the manuscript of William Burroughs's *Exterminator!* and well into compiling a Burroughs collection, was compelled to inquire. With some hesitation, Bob quoted a price of $700 US warning he'd have it in his next catalogue – which meant I had a couple of months to consider it.

I managed to raise the money toward the end of January 81, stopping by The Village Bookstore one afternoon on my route, to phone down the order, only to discover it had sold two days earlier, from the catalogue. Brief disappointment turned impulsively to the consideration of other acquisitions in consolation, the matter effectively laid to rest.

Then my copy of catalogue 166 arrived (Canadian donkey express), and there was the manuscript – offered together with the holograph manuscript of Allen Ginsberg's introduction, the 'master' galley, and the "author's proof"– item #357: priced $350!

I could have bought it a month earlier at that price, the old floating quote routine, an unexpected lowblow! Yet I had thought the thing cheap at $700 – setting me to wonder about how people evaluate manuscript material.

About eight years later, one night at The Rivoli, I bumped into David Mason and Steven Temple deep in contemplation of the more arcane mysteries of the universe…actually, discussing the value of Robertson Davies manuscripts. My opinion of the worth of the manuscript of his novel *Fifth Business* was invited, so I

stabbed somewhere in the three to four thousand range – to amused smirks from both. They saw it in the $7500 to $15,000 register. Then a few days later at breakfast, David referred to a revised evaluation of $50,000 – reviving old wonders.

How does the manuscript of a mannerly melodrama propounding the singular importance of myth in intellectual development (time-worn academic conceit) by a writer who has failed to alter the course of modern literature even a little, manage to achieve a value more than 100 times that of a roughly contemporary manuscript assailing the complacency of precisely these mytho-psychological constructs, by a widely heralded innovator whose methods of construction (*eg*, syntactic permutation) and conception (patterned integrities constellating a mime of anomie) have arguably changed the way an entire generation approaches the word? Each essentially a satirist yet one determined to renovate both craft and stance in his reflection of the world in the word.

Certainly popularity isn't the critical factor: otherwise the manuscripts of 'heavyweights' like Harold Robbins would command greater premiums. The key to a relativity of value, after all bibliographical criteria are considered, hinges on a comparison with related effects. So, half consciously, I began to collect examples of manuscript evaluation to open greater perspective on this question of the value of the second guess.

Just about this time the manuscript of Franz Kafka's *Trial* (1915) went on the block at Sotheby's in London, expected to set a record for modern literary documents – somewhere around a million pounds (the previous record set in 1985 at £250,000 for The Great Vellum Notebook of W. B. Yeats, containing drafts of his more famous works). Compare this to the sales of the manuscripts of E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) in the early 60s – £5000; Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies* (1930) in 1985 – £55,000; and 40 letters of Mahatma Gandhi in 1988 – £104,500. The great expectations for this unrevised and abandoned manuscript partly point to its exceptional significance as a *conceptual* paradigm, the value of cultural *innovation* evidently not inconsiderable in the process of evaluation.

Then I turned to the colleague 'fish-story' about the original sheet of an unpublished Stephen Foster song which a client brought to their booth at the Boston Bookfair a year ago, wanting Richard Shuh and his partner Jeff Marks to get him $8000 for it. They promptly flipped it to Harvey Tucker for $10,000 – a nice commission of $1000 each for use of their booth – and the matter was expertly deflected out of mind. Not quite! Turns out Harvey sold it at the same fair for $75,000 to another dealer who displayed it in his booth at $165,000!

> "The letters and manuscripts of Stephen Collins Foster, a steel-city Northerner who wrote great Southern songs about places he had never visited and folks he had never met, are awesomely elusive. The few letters I have encountered from his pen, set forth in an ebullient script, discuss his famous songs and the pittance he got for them. For *Old Folks at Home,* one of the best sellers of all time, he received only $500. Foster died in poverty in a cheap New York rooming house."
> [Charles Hamilton, *The Signature of Amercia,* p109]

Obviously knowing something of the scarcity of Foster manuscripts would have changed things, but the question I wonder is, would that knowledge alone have been enough to reach the ultimate ballpark. What reasoning got the last dealer to $165,000? Did he roughly double his cost, adding a cushion against a 10% discount? Or, did he maintain the sheet was worth the price?

Higher risk deserves higher return, yet the fact is, it's not uncommon for high-rollers to sell expensive books on margins of 10 and 20 percent – doubling a price, more the rule on smaller books. Still, there are a lot of big items out there in the hands of the timid and uninformed, vulnerable to the highballers' code of commerce: you can't overpay for something significant that's unique (profits potentially much greater in the upper register). The strategy of doubling one's cost, moreover, rarely contributes insight to the question of evaluation.

The next thing I considered was the difference between poetry and fiction manuscripts. Bill Hoffer's LIST 71 (December 1988) offered the author's typescript of the original 1936 version of *News of the Phœnix* by A. J. M. Smith – a manuscript of 46 leaves containing 32 poems, with holograph revisions, and ten poems excluded from the published book (1943): for $3500. The importance to Canadian literature of this manuscript, by the dominant force behind the McGill Movement of the 20s, may be contextualized by relating it with the 19 other comparably significant Modernist manuscripts to that point in our history, as one of our more valuable early Modern literary documents.

Strange Fugitive Morley Callaghan (1928); *A Native Argosy* Morley Callaghan (1929); *White Narcissus* Raymond Knister (1929); *It's Never Over* Morley Callaghan (1930); *The Roosevelt and the Antinœ* E. J. Pratt (1930); *Laconics* W. W. E. Ross (1930); *Sonnets* W. W. E. Ross (1932); *Many Moods* E. J. Pratt (1932); *A Broken Journey* Morley Callaghan (1932); *The Shrouding* Leo Kennedy (1933); *My Star Predominant* Raymond Knister (1934); *Such Is My Beloved* Morley Callaghan (1934); *They Shall Inherit the Earth* Morley Callaghan (1935); *The Titanic* E. J. Pratt (1935); *The Golden Chalice* Ralph Gustafson (1935);

Now that April's Here Morley Callaghan (1936); *Think of the Earth* Bertram Brooker (1936); *New Provinces* (1936); *The White Savannahs* W. E. Collin (1936) – excluding Pratt's first five, the two early books by Dorothy Livesay, and the eight by Frederick Philip Grove, as ancillary to Modernism.

If the manuscript of *Fifth Business* were really worth $50,000, and this Smith manuscript $3500, it would seem to imply that we in Canada value novels far more than poetry. *Fifth Business,* though generally regarded one of Davies's best, isn't considered a seminal work of art. Neither it nor its author has changed literature.

It may be the popularity of *Fifth Business* (and the other volumes in the trilogy) which accounts for this value, but as is demonstrated in the case of writers like Mazo de la Roche and John Galsworthy, popularity at best imparts transient value – a hyperbolic currency of the moment. Cultural evaluators might be expected to weigh more than the fleeting flush of polite applause.

Poetry – on which creative literature has depended for its advancement through all but the last 250 years – loses relative value to this popularity-based measure, given its steadily-diminishing audience. In fact, this may be the essential theme in *Fifth Business,* considering that the tradition of myth is expressly poetic.

It should be patently evident that reaching the greatest number of auditors is less important than what is said. The 'enduring popularity' of the interpretive artist of the past – Sarah Bernhardt, David Garrick, *etc* – serves to illustrate what those trading in presence (not unlike the politician or door-to-door salesman) manage to sustain by talking generalities, telling the crowd what it already thinks. A more durable measure of cultural significance arguably emerges from the particulars.

The fact that *News of the Phœnix* won the Governor General's Award for 1943, means more than that it was

merely judged by its peers to be more distinguished than the handful of other books of poetry that year. To that point in our literary history, and even less when it was composed, *News of the Phœnix* had very few Canadian antecedents to which it might be compared – eight in 1936; twenty, counting some pretty slender chapbooks, by 1943 [*cf,* APPENDIX]:

> *Fable of the Goats* E. J. Pratt (1937); *Viper's Bugloss* John Smalacombe [L. A. MacKay] (1938); *The Wind Our Enemy* Anne Marriott (1939); *Hath Not a Jew* A. M. Klein (1940); *Brebeuf and His Brethren* E. J. Pratt (1941); *Calling Adventurers!* Anne Marriott (1941); *Dunkirk* E. J. Pratt (1941); *Epithalamium in Time of War* Ralph Gustafson (1941); *David* Earle Birney (1942); *Lyrics Unromantic* Ralph Gustafson (1942); *Salt Marsh* Anne Marriott (1942); *Still Life* E. J. Pratt (1943).

A fair evaluation of *News of the Phœnix* would have to consider its critical (not popular) significance to that point in literary history, and how seminal its effects proved for those to whom it spoke.

Of course, the difference between $3500 and $50,000 may simply be hard knowledge of the market, the Smith perhaps worth more than its price, but because offered for sale – not donated like the Davies – pared down to the inner parameter of a bitter market reality. Then again, appraisals for donation and tax credit aren't considered an accurate reflection of market conditions; nor would it establish anything to reduce the value of the Smith manuscript to $100 to stimulate 'demand'.

My twelfth list (November 1985) describes an archive of more than 7500 leaves of the manuscripts of Raymond Souster, representing the third installment of his papers offered for sale (the first two acquired years earlier by the University of Toronto at $10,000 per installment). The poet needed money quickly to pay for medical

expenses and care of his parents, so we determined most conservative prices for the various manuscripts in the archive to encourage acquisition – $18,550 for every draft of the manuscripts of nine books: *From Hell to Breakfast* (1980); *Going the Distance* (1983); *Jubilee of Death* (1984); *It Takes All Kinds* (1986); plus the five volumes of his *Collected Poems* (1980–4); as well as correspondence; a file documenting the formation of the League of Canadian Poets (1967); an album of clipped poems printed anonymously in local newspapers from the 30s and 40s; and other miscellaneous goodies. I couldn't interest anyone. No-one it seems *wanted* the Souster papers; pointing up a fatal deficiency among acquisitions librarians who fail to recognize what posterity cannot. Can they not appreciate that they've been invested to preserve what history commands, not what they prefer!

Forget that Souster had courteously risen to the request from University College to *donate* two days a week to students (while Mary di Michele, the *official* writer-in-residence was paid more for essentially the same service, than the asking price for his archive). One of the three indisputable architects of Modernism in Canadian literature, who had conceived, edited and printed two of the most important literary magazines in our history; founded the most important press in our history; established the first regular reading series in our history; founded the League of Canadian Poets; and besides contributing hugely with his fine ear some of the cleanest poetry of our time, helped more serious young poets in this country land a place in that history than anyone else before the era of taxpaid programmes (such as writers-in-residence).

Forget the U of T debt in his favour! All Souster wanted was to get those papers out of his basement beyond risk of damage, into the security of the library

beside his other files, and collect an incredibly modest honorarium acknowledging his contribution: $18,550 for ten years' work, amounting to an average of $1855 a year of our taxloot (given the source of institutional funding) against an immeasurable equity in Canadian documentary resource.

This archive provided another insight for me: because of Michael Macklem's unique arrangement with Queen's, the original typescript submission of every manuscript accepted by Oberon is forwarded, without revisions, directly to the Oberon Press archive at Queen's. A proof, typeset to include suggested revisions by Macklem, is returned to the author for correction. So that unless the author has made a copy of his original, s/he can't easily follow Macklem's changes.

Souster's manuscripts from his Oberon period (1968 to present) therefore properly describe his carbon typescripts on which he records the *authorized* revisions – all the manuscripts in the archive in question incorporating annotations and revisions in ink or pencil. The original typescripts at Queen's merely present the formality of priority, to accommodate Macklem's subsidy arrangement.

It can't be more obvious that the true manuscript in the sense of the function it holds for the author, remains in Souster's case (and other Oberon luckies) the carbon typescript on which he records afterthoughts awaiting galleys. But the apparent confusion of "copies" of Souster manuscripts at market has mistakenly clouded the perception of their value among disinterested cultural mediators.

Eventually, with added material, the Souster archive passed into one, then another colleagues' hands (reappraised at $25,000) and with the co-operation of Bruce Whiteman – Souster's bibliographer and acquisitions librarian at McGill – ended up there for $10,000.

Still, I can't help thinking that welfare coughs up more a year than that for absolutely no contribution to either the cultural or social ethos, both boats hot with gravy from the same pan. And when you take into consideration what little these books earned Souster in 'royalties', it becomes apparent the comptrollers of our cultural legacy remain insensitive to this disgraceful discounting of an important contribution summoned from Souster's spirit of unbridled charity, to increase the hold we as a nation maintain on the word.

Of the eight Oberon books in the archive, figures from Whiteman's bibliography available for the first four volumes of Souster's *Collected Poems,* disclose a potential total retail return for all copies of all issues, of $50,729.85 – which when reduced by the booksellers' discount (in Oberon's case, 45% outright) amounts to $27,901.42 from which costs, royalties and profits must come. Souster's end – likely 10% – comprises a maximum of $2790.14, for four of his potentially best-selling volumes.

And the only grants acknowledged in any of Souster's books subscribe *publishing* aid (Macklem risking little with sustaining guarantees of block grant, manuscript sales to Queen's, and standing orders from libraries).

Why Souster should have to settle for $10,000 when other writers managed large settlements and larger evaluations during the same miserable period, remains baffling. Al Purdy netted $60,000 from his last ten-year installment to the Purdy archive at Queen's at about the same time; and despite their insistent penury, the National Library, I understand, paid $90,000 for the papers of George Bowering and $120,000 for the archive of Elizabeth Smart. Their subsequent acquisition of the papers of Michel Tremblay for $250,000 casts the issue of relative value into even more dramatic relief.

The failure to appreciate the significance of Souster's contribution to our culture has not been confined to librarians. Scholars likewise have overlooked his importance to history, failing not only to consider his initiative in establishing Contact (paying for it entirely out of pocket) but also missing its significance in the broader scope of modern poetry. Their lack of insight comprises a failure of vision – which appears to form the basis for Souster's devaluation.

There are only 3 books on Souster: *The Retrospective Vision of Raymond Souster* Martin Singleton (1976: UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK, Fredericton) – an unpublished thesis; *Louis Dudek & Raymond Souster* Frank Davey (1980: Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver); and *Raymond Souster and His Works* Bruce Whiteman (nd: ECW PRESS, Toronto) – comprising 40 pages. Not one word of these three relatively inaccessible studies, however, is devoted to the *revolutionary* significance of the movement he pioneered with Dudek and Layton.

The Social Realist movement rose up in vigorous defiance of the Academy to take literature out of the steeple into the street. Although the novel had been appropriated early as a *popular* means of expression, poetry competent enough to garner the accreditation of scholars, remained – with very few exceptions before the twentieth century – in the keep of the Academy. If you hadn't gone to university the calibre of your work was suspect.

This began to change following Pound's dismissal from Wabash College in 1908, for sheltering a wayward chorus girl in his room during a winter storm. His contempt for the inflexible proprieties of academic society swelled illimitably to megalomaniacal proportions, producing a cultural monstrosity determined to deform the complacency of literary mediocrity for good.

Pound's interminable militation for an independent press grew out of his mistrust of sanctioned authority. He envisioned an ethos where initiative and passion would displace delegation and duty as the primers to cultural intercourse; and the means of effecting his vision of a creative community free of the constraints of conformity and consensus, lay in the creation of an Independent Press. He endorsed the early upstarts – Beatrice Hastings of The New Age (1907–21); Harriet Monroe & Alice Corbin at Poetry (1912); Dora Marsden & Harriet Weaver of The New Freewoman (1913) and The Egoist (1914–9); and Margaret Anderson & Jane Heap of The Little Review (1914–29) – contributing his editorial services freely, while encouraging all others inclined to join the revolt, to wrest culture from the authoritarian compact of the institutional pedagogue at all cost. The language, after all, was there for everyman to celebrate and explore.

This gave rise in Canada to what I term the School of the Unschooled, a loose confederacy of poets born before the War who abjured university and the merits of a degree in literature to establish a more inclusive ethos open to all: Milton Acorn, bill bissett, Gerry Gilbert, John Newlove, Alden Nowlan, Padraig O'Broin, Al Purdy and Raymond Souster, among others. The revolution they turned on convention from 1943 through the 50s, sent the academic poets reeling and changed the state of the art irrevocably.

Poetry suddenly became accessible to the common joe, both comprehensible and interesting. No volume of Canadian poetry before Irving Layton's *A Red Carpet for the Sun* (1959) had sold 5000 copies of a first printing – its publisher emboldened by the success to undertake one of the most ambitious trade publishing ventures in our history, investing disproportionate sums in elaborate designs by Frank Newfeld for a new poetry series. This

hearkened back to the imperative of the fledgling Fine Press of the 1890s (*eg*, Stone & Kimball, Copeland & Day *et al*) emphasizing quality indifferent to cost.

The wardens of the academic trust did their best to ignore or demean the populist plant but by the time Northrop Frye had replaced E. K. Brown as resident arbiter of the University of Toronto Quarterly (1952) the distinction between a weed and a flower had grown obscure enough to demand classification:

> "The poetry of social protest, during the thirties, was attached to a number of powerful supports: it had a philosophy of Marxism, a programme of action in the proletarian revolution, and a reading public among bourgeois intellectuals. It never achieved a really distinguished expression, but it spoke for a large and influential pressure group. *Nous avons change tout cela;* the poet's heart is no longer so far on the left side, and the poetry of social protest has retreated into a disembodied anarchism, in some respects a reversion to the old artist-versus-society theme of earlier decades. One of the leaders in this anarchistic development is evidently Kenneth Patchen, whose merits are not yet entirely clear to me, though his mind certainly has some of the imaginative qualities of a great poet. The movement has a Canadian representative this year in Irving Layton's *The Black Huntsman*....One can get as tired of buttocks in Mr Layton as of buttercups in the Canadian Poetry Magazine; and a poet whose imagination is still fettered by a moral conscience, even an anti-conventional one, gives the impression of being in the same state of bondage as the society he attacks." [Northrop Frye, LETTERS IN CANADA 1951]

Two years later, however, Frye was forced to concede:

> "...the question of whether Mr Layton is a real poet or not is settled by *In the Midst of My Fever* (Divers Press, Majorca, 41pp). An imaginative revolution is

> proclaimed all through this book...At last it is possible to see what kind of poet Mr Layton is, and he proves to be not a satirist at all, but an erudite elegiac poet, whose technique turns on an aligning of the romantic and the ironic...One finds something of value on nearly every page...Whatever lapses in expression one may find are of little importance when one is so constantly in touch with a poetic mind of genuine dignity and power." [Northrop Frye, LETTERS IN CANADA 1954]

Souster met with his early endorsement from an even greater authority, William Carlos Williams – architect of the Modernist revolution along with Pound (and Souster's exemplar as editor of the antecedent Contact magazine) – reviewing his work in *Cerberus* (1952) with unqualified approbation:

> "I read Irving Layton but try as I may, it doesn't come off. Maybe the age is at fault. But somehow when I read you I am moved. I am moved by your subject matter and I am moved by the way that has induced you to conform to it as the very fountain head of your art."
>
> [William Carlos Williams to Ray Souster, 28 June 1952]

And the increasing influence of the Social Realists continued to encroach on the vested interests of the Academy until shortly after the publication of Frye's celebrated *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957).

The prime distinction between literature about life and literature about literature is that the former abjures all myth but the most familiar. Likening a subject to Job or Prometheus automatically excludes those ignorant of the qualities invoked, from appreciating the point – a position the Social Realists endeavoured to avoid. An academic poet, on the other hand, was indoctrinated to appreciate the focal imperative of tradition, steeped in the belief that the subject of poetry would always be

the great moral, metaphysical and æsthetic issues of history, and that the quintessential language conveying it would ever remain myth. A literature of experience, in contrast, unwittingly demeaned the significance of the traditional matters, they felt – oblivious, it seems, to the rationale behind a return to self-reliance: the font of poetic origins – by reducing poetry to the merest fundamentals of unsophisticated perception.

The academic charge sounded against this insufferable simplification of literature in Frye's low-classic review of Layton's *The Black Huntsman,* escalated with the publication of *Anatomy of Criticism* and shortly after, his critical conclusion to *Literary History of Canada* (1965; begun in 1957). This year, which also witnessed the creation of the CANADA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS – introducing the spectre of government intervention in the cultural ethos – signalled the erosion of Social Realism and the retrenchment of a mythopœic hegemony. Academic poets such as Margaret Atwood, George Bowering, Leonard Cohen, Frank Davey, Doug Jones, Dennis Lee, Eli Mandel and Michael Ondaatje steadily rose to prominence over Unschooled heirs like bill bissett, Victor Coleman, David Donnell, William Hawkins, Gwendolyn MacEwen, David McFadden, George Miller, bpNichol, Joe Rosenblatt, Peter Trower *et al.*

And the critical importance of this heroic assault on the Academy by under-educated upstarts, has gone largely unrecognized in the generic retail of modern Canadian literary history. Indeed, most 'experts' in the field remain oblivious to this chapter in our history, largely because the Contact Press (which superseded its more revolutionary progenitor, Contact magazine) is reflexively perceived as having academic affinities through its Montreal editors, Irving Layton and Louis Dudek – both professors incorporating myth in their

work. Souster independently, however, dared to elevate a literature-without-precedent in a climate of conformity notoriously resilient to innovation, for which his exertions more than those of his collaborators, have been unofficially imperilled with decomposition.

Most telling, in fiction, no novel I know presents the academic case for the focality of myth in intellectual growth as convincingly as *Fifth Business* – arguably the dominant novel valorizing myth. Might not the disparity between the exceptional value accorded the manuscript of this novel, and that of Souster's archive, prove signal, in this light?

Which inevitably leads to the critical relevance of context in the evaluation of cultural artifacts (where notoriety, on its own, will generally fail to endure as an indicator of sustaining significance).

A disparity from appraiser to appraiser evaluating the same document piques irritating suspicion over the methods used to determine value. The bookseller asks how much the typescript is worth; the librarian, 'is it worth buying'.

Value accorded to goods signifies 'replacement value', which may be divided into three categories: ideal, fair market, and market – or real(izable) – value.

IDEAL VALUE – the *cost* of providing another copy to market – is governed predominantly by an economics of *supply.*

FAIR MARKET VALUE adds a reasonable markup to the replacement cost – *ie,* cost + *profit* – to maintain delivery of the merchant's services (in Canada the mean net return for small business ranging about 17%).

MARKET VALUE reflects the *price* the market will bear – *ie,* cost + profit adjusted to meet *demand.*

The time-worn market dictum that a thing is only worth what you can get for it, appears in this light, to sacrifice concern for supply to the pander for demand.

All value is relative: supply affecting cost; demand affecting price. An endless supply incites competitive prices, resulting in bargains. Sustained demand pushes prices up. And where supply has been exhausted, and no sum can produce another copy of the object under consideration, an evaluation must proceed on relative value. A unique object, for instance, sustains a relative value *greater* than the value of one of five million copies of a comparable object, regardless of demand.

Relative value – a comparison of like objects – involves a review of several factors: period, limitation, medium and condition on the side of production; and in addressing demand: the creative significance of the object both to the moment (*ie,* market) *and* to history (*ie,* posterity). If a case may be made for an object's significance, the context of that distinction – a style or ideal – informs value. Prices realized for like objects in common categories establish the parameters of relative value within those categories.

The evaluation of a unique artifact like a painting or manuscript, is governed by criteria of relative value. Significant artifacts beyond supply are often said to be 'invaluable' and frequently described as 'priceless'. But the informed appraiser is able to estimate the relative value of such things through a knowledge of categories to which they relate. The critical factor being his apperception of and familiarity with the relevant categories – or in other words, he must know the field.

Employing criteria governing the value of fiction to evaluate poetry is no more reliable than resorting to the criteria for evaluating conventional forms to weigh the merits of experimental literature. Each category is governed by distinct criteria portending particular

parameters of value. Frye's assertion that all liberal arts, because they employ language, may be evaluated first on literary grounds, was never intended to erase the distinctions between psychology and religion. Criteria, however, which enable us to focus on relative value do not preclude a comparison of relative values among disparate literary forms, in establishing worth.

Although the highest price realized for a Fantastic Realist painting may not approach the Impressionist record, the parameters of value for the more recent genre establish guidelines of relative value which may be exceeded by a future sale – at which juncture the parameters of value for paintings in general supersede its measure of particular relative value. In other words, the broader spectrum of literary evaluation ultimately bears on the relative value specific to each literary genre.

Market value, serving primarily capital concerns, is disposed to ignore production cost and utility in its devotion to demand, conforming more responsively – yet less responsibly – than the other values, to artificial conditions. De Beers buys all the diamonds in the world to maintain the credibility of their product (*ie,* keep prices up) even at a cost of paying the Russians more a year for their synthetic stones than any other single export returns to Russia annually – perhaps the first instance of socialist production based not on need or utility, but on a captive market: the very essence of the ideal capital enterprise. In fact the cost of producing the diamonds *exceeds* the return, the entire exercise contrived to generate badly-needed foreign exchange. The concentrated supply of a commodity, it may be seen, has the potential to reduce price to an immediate market, unless carefully tended.

The evaluation of cultural effects surely requires more than an auction block or market approach. The general

use theory of value in economics defines value as "the total utility which is yielded by the object in question" [G. Bannock / R. G. Baxter / R. Rees, *A Dictionary of Economics,* 1972: Penguin]. And to plot the parameters of this total use in literature we must include the use the author makes of literature – a discussion expressed in the autonomous forms of a literary tradition. It is a conversation the author is having with all culture; or as Frye put it, "the artist is not heard but overheard" and "poetry is a disinterested use of words: it does not address a reader directly" [*Anatomy of Criticism*].

Take the conceptual work of the New Wave writers – bpNichol for instance. An uninformed appraisal of his conceptual poetry might confront a quality of playful iconoclasm which seems more trivial than serious, if even art. Only through curiosity (a charity of audition) and the willing suspension of disbelief is the astonishing breadth of his provocative insights revealed in the squiggles and phonemes defying the strictures of conventional structure. "The writer," Frye emphasizing, "not actively shaping his material at all, but rather a place where a verbal structure is taking its own shape" [*Literary History of Canada*]. No one in Canada rising to the seductions of the open road quite like beep.

Yet a contribution of exceptional value to the ethos very difficult to demonstrate to his detractors without reverting to complex theories of literature, linguistics and perception. The studies are there for the sceptical – expert evaluations of his incontestable significance to the age and ultimately posterity – yet partly because of their complexity, not criteria summoned reflexively to evaluate his books by many of the so-called qualified 'experts' in Canadian literature at large. As a result, an important work in the progress of our culture may be devalued through sheer lack of awareness.

Victor Coleman's *America,* for example – the first extensive work of poetry in our culture composed entirely of double-acrostics. The poems are unusually artificial; yet when it is appreciated that the spell which Charles Olson's theory of composition (by field) held over the New Wave generation, had proven so great a constraint that Victor undertook to break it with an even greater (and more bizarre) constraint, the value of this volume to our literature increases dramatically. Yet because there seems to be little demand for Victor's books, many 'experts' reflexively discount their value (regardless of supply) without once reflecting on the comparatively high prices of more conventional volumes on their own shelves which likewise lack demand. Too much art has been devalued by attempting to reduce it to a measure of 'standards' which don't apply.

The literary experts are not called upon to predict value but rather to reveal, through their knowledge of literary motivations and forms, what is there. Shakespeare isn't important because we like his work, but because *he* did something with the language nobody else has done. The job of literary evaluation involves recognizing the formal possibilities of literature to determine the relative values for all literary efforts, based on critical literary insights (not the *general* level of appreciation for the work). Only our perception of the value of the work, not Shakespeare's importance, increases from appreciating his significance – market demand contributing little to the issue of cultural value.

The value of the *Principia* in 1687, for instance, could only be appreciated by a handful of men, yet the value of Newton's ideas hasn't increased with awareness of their importance. The value of the *Principia* has little to do with its effect – it retains value as a work of genius. My acknowledgement of this value may require

a demonstration of the effects of Newton's principles for comprehension, but the importance of his ideas is not even remotely increased by my awe. The *Principia* took its time becoming a recognizably valuable book partly because its market was small, and partly because its significance remained obscure. Yet it was always a valuable work – recognition of its significance driving its perceived value up in the estimation of converts.

Demand is seldom responsible for the higher prices; rather a consensus in recognition among informed cultural evaluators, of the relative significance of the work. The exponential demand for popular authors, for instance, rarely drives the prices of their primary editions anywhere near those of Joyce or Hemingway.

Yet, though experts may be required to determine cultural value, a specialized market (*ie,* the experts to whom the work speaks) is rarely useful for establishing price. Manipulation of price to a threshold of market resistance, as a general index of pricing, clearly reveals its limitations in a specialized market. An exclusive market fosters a proprietary attitude toward supply – the typical specialist reasoning books accessible only to specialists have limited demand, therefore ought to be discounted (or de-valued) to accommodate the private or closed market.

Psychiatrists contend, for instance, that psychology books have little value outside their profession, and though they unquestionably value their source works highly, resist paying prices for rare psychology books comparable to those of literary rarities. *If they don't buy them, who will?* Which may illustrate to some degree that relying on a buyers' market (or demand economy) to set prices sustains the risk of artificial prices – not unlike those at a 'cooked' auction.

The point is that books are valued for their cultural significance before the market imperative of demand

enters the picture. Relative cultural significance never fails to inform market price – which may be determined, where supply compares with that of a like volume of comparable cultural significance, in relation to *its* price. All books of poetry from 1935 are not equally valuable, but those limited to a hundred copies by comparably significant poets generally maintain comparable prices. Suggesting that cultural and bibliographical criteria in fact assume precedence in the process of evaluation, over market considerations.

As supply diminishes, value – distinct from price – potentially increases. The sole copy of a text is more valuable than one of two copies, even if nobody wants it; a value reflecting cultural significance. Evaluation of unique cultural artifacts – such as a manuscript or painting – must be predicated on the consideration of this significance.

Similarly, cultural artifacts of extreme limitation maintain value – where the author, work or imprint are considered culturally significant – regardless of the demand sustained by market. Artists' prints are priced according to the parameters of value established for their specific limitation. The relative value of prints of equal limitation by different artists delimits a second measure of relative significance, which is carefully monitored by those concerned with the economy of cultural value. A knowledge of this relative value allows speculators to recognize works that are underpriced, by comparing them to comparably significant works of similar limitation.

For example, the collaborative work by bpNichol and Barbara Caruso: *The Adventures of Milt the Morph in Colour* (1972: Seripress). When I bought a copy the prevailing market price was $1500 and although there were only 30 copies produced, none had ever sold at

that price. The portfolio contains eight large multi-colour seriprints by the artist, who offers individual prints of her work for sale at between $250 and $400. It didn't take much to appreciate that, despite the absence of demand, the volume was drastically underpriced. And its value as the introductory volume from her new imprint, not to mention a highly desirable Nichol item, further augmented its relative worth.

And this is how books often 'appreciate' in value. A dealer with a copy of a limited edition by an author like William Burroughs encounters a higher priced copy in the catalogue of a colleague who has bothered to trace the relation to prevailing prices for comparable items of like limitation. The actual value doesn't increase, merely the recognition among those concerned with its evaluation. And, as in the case of *Milt the Morph,* neither has demand increased.

The effects of the Independent Press at large may in fact comprise the least 'appreciated' category of cultural artifacts in modern literature. Following the advent of the Little Magazine, Pound's vision of an Independent Press gave rise to the phenomenon of the smallpress, at first subsidized by patrons. Gradually the compulsion for greater independence drove the odd publisher to acquire a press or mimeo machine and produce the books by hand. And the products of this pioneering exertion remain among the most engaging and resonant artifacts of the entire Modernist era.

Independent Press (*ie,* produced by the publisher) is distinct from Fine Press in its emphasis on text before context. The Independent Presser may resort to more expedient materials to produce a serviceable vehicle for the text, and while seldom indifferent to design, makes launching the poet his priority; a reluctance to farm production distinguishing him further from the generic small commercial publisher.

Independent imprints share a quality with artists' prints which largely goes unrecognized in the trade. A broadside poem with lino illustration by the printer (such as those produced by Robert Rosewarne in the early 60s on his handpress in limitations comparable to artists' prints) is in fact precisely that – yet invites an evaluation from 'qualified experts' in the trade, beneath that of even the most common contemporary print. Likewise it may be argued that the independently hand-made volume preserves a similar quality: each copy in effect an artist's print, produced by the artist-poet on identical equipment in comparable quantities. Yet the same 'experts' apparently make little distinction among smallpress imprints – seldom even considering the process of production in establishing value.

The Independent Press effected a revolution which afforded poets their first broad medium of unqualified expression since the introduction of movable type. Direct speech and controversial issues erupted into the intellectual forum as a result – the coming of age of the Sceptical Revolution. And much of it came out as small pamphlets and ephemeral broadsides, characteristic of a one-man hands-on medium. In fact the dominant characteristic of the Post-Modern Press may prove to be this emphasis on ephemera, much of which exists in extremely limited and highly perishable editions.

A broad collection of effects from this revolution in production can only prove invaluable to posterity, yet the prevailing notion of *cultural* ephemera in the trade fails to discriminate between the value of the limited independent pamphlet or poem by a poet who remains unrecognized beyond his context, and an item of *social* ephemera whose relative abundance and method of production far exceed his means. They simply do not compare. A fresh register of relative value must be summoned to evaluate the pioneering Independent

Press effect – one which rejects the expedient prejudice that only very limited independent productions by *recognized* poets and artists deserve the perception of substantial value. Yet the Independent Press movement, particularly its early phase, will go down to history as the force which broke the hold of centralized authority in media for good, paving the way to the 'expansive' information superhighway of the Internet.

The cultural significance of an Independent Press imprint – not unlike earlier technological pioneers such as the first book printed on a steam-press and the first imprint to employ pulp paper; or more pointedly, the first book from William Morris's Kelmscott Press – is distinguished first for its part in fomenting a historic revolution in media which effectively broke the hold of centralizing ulterior interests like the state, church or big business, for the first time since the introduction of movable type – and subsequently by the relative excellence of its art.

Those who surrendered their desire for recognition, to impose the vision of a more active ethos accessible to all, made a heroic sacrifice which we must measure in terms of vision rather than effect. The masterpiece, as Artaud so clairvoyantly pointed out in the thirties, having consistently failed in its effort to ennoble many more than a handful of heirs to its vision, back to the inception of the cultural preserve.

And in this regard, it must be emphasized that Souster was one of the earliest and easily the most determined proponents of independent production in Canada – the publications which he guided through the Contact Press, all distinguished by his hands-on craftsmanship (in contrast to those of the other editors). Which compounds his importance to our cultural history as the moving force behind the Social Realist movement – a signal instigator of *two* of the most liberating revolts in the language.

Yet the importance of his contribution to our cultural history is augmented by yet a third consideration. The cost of production of the Independent Press effect is in fact disproportionate to its original market price. The cost of materials may be reflected in its price but very seldom the labour involved in production.

The poet who undertakes to produce his or her own book is confronted by a daunting spectrum of duties. All the tasks acquitted by the many employees of both the publishing house and the printshop and bindery, must be met. Our poet, after taking months or more to compose and edit the poems, is faced with typing clean copies imposed in their sequence for printing (or with mimeo, workable stencils). Another edit is required to ensure no typos have crept in (stencils *entirely* retyped if one is encountered), before the work of printing may proceed.

Imposition describes the placement of the pages in their sequence with respect to the printing medium. A 16-page folio which is being photocopied, for instance, will have pages 1 and 16 conjugate where the sheets are designed for folding, nesting and stitching. Maquettes made from the clean pages must be pasted-up in this order (2/15, 3/14, 4/13, *etc*) being careful to ensure that head lines on both sides of the sheet impose at roughly the same distance from the top of the page (*ie,* back-up).

If the book is photocopied or laserprinted, the poet soon learns not to rely on the auto-feed tray which may feed 'doubles' – two sheets fed together due to static – throwing the sequence out when the other sides are run. Forced to resort to hand-feeding, the poet finds that an edition of 100 copies – 800 sheets effectively – hand-fed into the machine, consumes untold hours alone for printing.

Folio production (each sheet folded once) beyond 32 pages proves too bulky for saddle-stitching or sewing,

forcing a resort to consequent signatures for books of greater length, or cutting the printed sheets in half and using a Japanese stitch.

Quarto production (each sheet folded twice) involves more complex imposition, requiring folded dummies of blank sheets to establish a formula. A 64-page quarto of consequent (rather than nested) 16-page signatures, requires an imposition for the first sheet, of pages 1, 4, 13 and 16 – with 4 and 13 inverted – backed with 2, 3, 14 and 15 (with 3 and 14 inverted). Each signature comprises two folded sheets nested, sewn to adjacent signatures with a Coptic stitch.

After printing, the poet has to collate the sheets, making sure not to pick up a duplicate from any of the piles in his transit around the table. This apparently simple task can prove deceptive in larger books. When *New Wave Canada* was printed, Souster was faced with removing the doors in his house to double as tables to accommodate the 90 piles of 1000 sheets he had to collate. His circuit around those 'tables' collating 90 separate sheets (of newsprint) 1000 times to ready the edition for binding was interminable, taking days.

The Independent Press effect is also bound by the poet / editor / publisher, most effectively using thread, but also with staples (on a saddle-stitcher or with a long-arm stapler) and sometimes perfectbound. The technology employed is never the defining measure of independence – dependency on the needle-maker no different from gaining access to a gluing machine – but rather the self-reliant mastery of those technologies. And the task of hand-folding and sewing an edition of 100 books of one signature (or 16 pages) will require a surprisingly full day.

And with the advent of personal computers the poet is faced with acquiring additional proficiencies if he or she wants to master the desktop expedient. Producing

a file of styled type (not digitally-altered clones) in text-blocks secure from reflow, with adequate gutters and margins, imposed for relay to the printer, demands a far greater grasp of technology than earlier media. The software is both expensive and complicated, requiring a lot of trial-and-error before its unmistakable benefits may be reaped.

For instance, an edited file ready for printing is not automatically imposed to back-up properly. The best book-design software, Quark XPress, will run spreads but not so that they can be backed-up in sequence. For that, you have to construct a separate file imposed for folio production by manually chaining the first and last pages and the second and second-last *etc,* as sheet conjugates. Only after 'pouring in' the text from your original file are the sheets ready to be hand-fed and backed-up one by one into the laserprinter. Labour intensive, even before collating, folding and binding.

The point to this digression is that if the publisher were to factor in his time both as poet and producer of the book, the cost of production would make the price prohibitive. So he prices the book in relation to trade books available in endless quantities at the commercial bookstores, effecting an artificial economy involving *price control.* Content to merely recover his costs for materials, he discounts the work others are paid well for, as his personal sacrifice in support of art. But this presents an enigma to the cultural evaluator.

Trade books are produced at a unit cost of between three and thirty dollars because printers and binders realize a profit through automation and specialization based on a volume of annual sales. The cost increases with the reduction of hands, a lone employee reducing the exercise to an inefficient undertaking. Yet in real terms, the value of an object is predicated on the cost of production.

The artist, by comparison, includes the cost of production as well as the materials in the price of a print. Similarly, a work of sculpture which might have been produced more economically by a crew of masons is never valued at *their* rate of production but by the measure of the artist's investment, however excessive. Yet if the Independent Press publisher factored in his time and proficiencies in pricing a hand-made book in the range of an artist's print, readers could only recoil.

Because the market for the Independent Press effect, as becomes evident, is largely other like-minded poets and publishers; none of whom enjoy the means needed to absorb the cost of such activity. So the Independent Press publisher prices his productions in a range which they can afford, disregarding the fact that the cost of production is disproportionate to the retail price. Which effects an *artificial economy.* The books are gradually absorbed, however, because those comprising the market appreciate the amount of work involved, recognizing that a handmade volume holds far greater value than its price, if only from limitation of supply. Demand in a market of like-minds characteristically remains continuous, whereas supply is often shortly exhausted.

But too many cultural evaluators fail to recognize the artificiality of such prices when looking to realized price for an indication of value. Rather than consider cost of production they determine open market value based on closed market price. Which brings me back to the third consideration of Souster's importance.

The closed market referred to is the Underground Movement – Souster and Burroughs alike among its senior denizens. It cultivates a *critical* attitude toward cultural commodification and the centralized industry of cultural mediation which condescends to validate art to an open market. The need for publishers, agents, gallery representation, *etc,* is increasingly questioned

by those who've learned the hard way that art under their control never fails to support more of these so-called supporters than it does artists.

Independent artists fund an underground economy bartering necessities as creatively as possible. Norval Morrisseau was notorious for trading his paintings for booze. Yet no sane evaluator of modern art would think to estimate the value of these paintings in terms of the price of a bottle of wine. Likewise, during the heyday of rent controls in New York, closed market conditions saw valuable properties pass from tenant to friend, with very few of these coveted bargains ever being made available to strangers on the open market.

Value and artificial price are in fact no more related than the value of a house won in a lottery with a ticket bought for ten dollars.

The imprints of the Underground Movement and the Independent Press command a value beyond the limits of this closed market. Merely employing *conventional* criteria – ideal value reflecting the cost of production – they may be demonstrated to exceed the confines of the underground economy, even before their value as revolutionary communiqués is introduced. And when you include scarcity of supply, the fair market value begins to reflect the sustaining significance they shed in our culture.

What I'm getting at is that poets and artists who may be widely respected in the underground by their peers as seminal forces in contemporary art, aren't always recognized on the open market. Burroughs was widely regarded as one of the pre-eminent creative forces in the underground long before he became popular on the open market. His works were in continuous demand, yet his more elusive independently-produced books were always hard to supply, always commanding high

premiums. Those of us who actively sought to supply these effects know their value better than the general 'expert' enlisted to appraise what he never bothered to focus on.

And specifically, I mean the focus on supply – value defined as *replacement* value or the cost of supplying *another* copy. As demand increased for Burroughs's works the prices went up yet the relative value of his rarest books maintained their relation to these prices. Only someone aware of the scarcity of supply and the concomitant expense involved in producing another copy, it seems obvious, is qualified to assess the value of such fugitive effects. If, as in the case with Burroughs, for instance, there were no available copies of his most elusive books at market with which to compare, and auction records for those titles were wanting, the impatient appraiser might find it expedient to rely on instinct to arrive at a value – establishing little.

Similarly the effects of the less-recognized seminal underground artist require the expertise of those who recognize the significance of their work, the context in which that work has value, and the scarcity of supply. The failure to recognize, for instance, that the glaring disparity in value between a poetry manuscript such as *News of the Phœnix* (at $3500) and a work of fiction like *Fifth Business* (at $50,000) may reflect an indefensible bias against the relative value of poetry in our culture, has the potential to affect future appraisals of poetry where the issue has not been considered. After all, the market for all art – regardless of genre – is affected by a record sale, expanding the parameters of relative, as well as potential value.

And it is in this context that a re-evaluation of the Independent Press publication is warranted. An early broadside by Toronto's poet laureate produced by hand

at Coach House Press in 1968 in an edition of only 50 copies, is virtually unobtainable and highly significant. But the prevailing attitude among Canadian dealers is that cultural artifacts of this sort are only marginally valuable – predicated on the fact that they're hard to sell at a high price. Yet the dominant literary dealer in North America exhibits little compunction in offering *two* copies of a broadside of James Joyce's *Gas from a Burner* (1912) at $85,000 US each – exceeding the highest price on the NET for a fine copy of *Ulysses* in original state. Supply apparently exceeds demand; yet his price reflects a relative value greater than that of the finest copy of arguably the greatest book of the last century. Which suggests that Peter Howard's perception of the *scarcity* of this fragile piece of ephemera warrants such value, regardless of how hard it is to sell at that price. A knowledge of supply – which often accounts for the reserve bid at auction – proving far more contributive to informed *evaluation* than a poll of demand.

Serving, moreover, to illustrate the potential relative value of literary ephemera – given that in either case, the author's significance is constant.

It bears emphasizing that the market for the rare book is continuously defined by a *different* person, whereas the data-base of supply represents an accumulation of experience by the *same* individual – illustrating which might prove the more coherent measure of value.

Things of significance have value, the recognition of that value requiring a recognition of the significance. The perception that manuscripts of poetry by a poet who defied the academic status quo of myth-borne craft to establish a more inclusive cultural ethos – at no little cost to his reputation (not to mention the expense of his Independent enterprises) his art relegated to a subterranean interzone – have slight relative value in comparison with manuscripts of celebrated novelists,

playwrights and academic poets, plainly comprises a failure to recognize the poet's significance. Which is predictable with revolutionary art – those maintaining the status quo among the last to appreciate the value of a vision which strives to revise the authority they base their cultural recognition on.

Yet the responsible appraiser must recognize that an unexamined bias against poetry of an experimental or revolutionary nature, against the Independent Press effect and against the Underground Movement distorts the significance of the contribution made to culture by such pioneers as bissett, Caruso, Coleman, Gilbert, Nichol, Rosewarne and Souster – and in the case of Coleman, Nichol and Souster a legacy, in context, as seminal as that of Pound (for the numerous enterprises they initiated in support of the ethos).

The significance of their work is undeniable. But if the focus is turned to the open market, not discipline, a fair evaluation of that significance will prove elusive.

The focal issue is authority. What every Independent revolutionary back to Pound set out to upset was the conceit that authority depends on recognition from antecedent authorities. Institutional accreditation, like the publisher's imprimatur, afforded society a reliable standard (ideally) by which to measure – and sanitize – authority. But the hands-on revolution gave rise to the realization that you *author* your authority – the measure of your consideration reflected in the aspects of word and world examined in the work. Introducing the prospect of the Avant Garde (although generally not recognized, it should be obvious that the so-called Avant Garde was *not* an academic advance).

Who needed a third party to validate the credibility of insights made in private under conditions which could never be replicated! The Independent Press book

assailed the status quo with the revolutionary concept that a reader might evaluate its significance on his own without mediation or guidance from a so-called expert. Almost as if a poem or work of art were as unique and implacable as a fresh breeze – the weatherman not able to impart anything meaningful to the unmanageability of blown locks beyond the oily trump of unflappable institutional authority.

Which of course left the authorities and 'experts' in cultural evaluation high and dry – leading ultimately to a categorical opposition to art-without-precedent.

Yet this revolution was predicated on a fundamental premise of scepticism: authority of perception remains relative. Our facility for questioning authority has ever depended on the comparative evaluation of thesis and antithesis, the authority of the work explicit in its use – or rejection – of intellectual paradigms. The poet was free to go anywhere in the language in his quest for insight, not confined to a curriculum of prescribed figures and facilities – a *liberal* tradition, because the dispassionate weighing of thesis and antithesis (*libra* = scales – equatable with the process of evaluation, which is likewise relative) is predicated on 'the book' (*liber* = literacy); in other words, the concept of freedom proves quintessentially intellectual (*ie,* the law of letters).

Revolutions against the academic occupation of the Orphic estate had been mounted before, the troubadors of mediæval France enduing the countryside with lyric redress against the elaborate ornament of the rigorous courtly poetic. And the metrical emancipations of Dafydd ap Gwilym ultimately redeeming the 16th-century Welsh poet from an onerous restriction to the figments of his accredited grade of competency.

Because poetry was the preserve of the Faith and the Law governors repeatedly endeavoured to transform it from an art into a science, replete with its baggage of

compulsory forms and figures on which the practice was determined to depend. Yet poetry unlike medicine or law builds, as it turns out, not on an encyclopædic facility in the employment and recognition of poetic precedents (such as myth), but on mere transmutation of impression to expression. Poetry was magic; the poet a mantic seer capable of transforming common speech into the most insightful vision. History is full of stories of poets like Daniel who repeatedly outshone the poetic 'authorities' with his incipient clairvoyance, sufficient to validate the renovation of all moribund craft. And while the age may buckle under the gravity of the sophistications august governors endorse, the simplest poem by a common shepherd takes effortless flight with the imagination of everyone it graces.

Attending these miraculous flights of insight however won't confer expertise so much as experience. And those in the business of evaluating books and manuscripts of poetry in Canada who have not followed the progress of the art, simply lack the experience to determine the relative significance of the craft – both to our culture and to the broader discipline of poetry at large.

In the greater realm of Modernist literature, it is crucial to appreciate that the essence of Modernism was the abandonment of a conformist dynamic and linguistic, the replacement of moribund forms and constructs requiring fresh expressions which might better reflect the age and its exponential proliferation of technological advances – the writer empowered to hold a glass to his age to capture the most *durable* reflection.

Which implies that modern writers themselves valued innovation above conformity. They recognized their age as a progressive period in history in which the impulse for creative expression would prove regressive where it failed to advance their art. Detractors of this fixation on

'art-as-news' denigrated the new generation for its 'cult of novelty', without appreciating that the focus was in fact *renovation.* Others, like Olson, knew enough to pose their doubt in historical terms, at least – progress itself arguably proving little more than a myth.

The polished narrative of proper Oxford prose, for example, elegantly mannered with stylized characters carefully drawn into the crisis of a transformation through the seductive plotting of suspended digressions turned on heightened anticipation, no longer arrested the creative temper inclined to a more vernacular line which reflexively discarded the syntactical gratuities of conjunctive and preposition wherever the work might be tightened. Concision – the gem of insight, stoked no longer on the vastest seam of mined elaboration.

Modernist compression was less a recoil to novelty than the flex of hypothesis posing possible methods for reflecting more of the moment in the monument. The stylized character gave way to an enigmatic, far less representative (or mimetic) protagonist who generally symbolized man's surrender to conditions. Identity in the common joe, having abandoned the constraints of the conformist dynamic to entertain the prospects of a more particular coherence – in concert with the new particularization in art (aspect superseding prospect) and science (*eg,* the momentous rise of the electron).

And the relative significance of these experiments in reflection assume their *seminal* value in relation to the broader prospect of Modernism. The pataphysical play questioned the relevance of the status quo as seriously as the metaphysical poem, yet might appear – as does so much of what may be categorized as Anti-art – far less significant on its own, as literature. Similarly the context of Modernism is summoned to relate divergent experiments in image (Imagism) and language (Stein and the concomitant Language school).

The multiplicity of Modernist violations of the old conformist proprieties in no way diminishes the importance of this revolutionary quest for a better fidelity of reflection. Nor do the seemingly infinite varieties of modern experiment justify the devaluation of works lacking precedent. The fact that a literature of formula is more widely recognizable is hardly reason to assert, by default, its greater relative significance to culture. Yet higher relative values for traditional works (like *Fifth Business*) – though the centrality of *experiment* to 20th-century literature has long been demonstrable – provoke no controversy whatever.

Yet my purpose is not to question the evaluation of this manuscript so much as insist that its accepted relative value adjusts by association the register of values for all other Canadian literary works. Cultural evaluation has the effect of establishing parameters of value against which future evaluations may be compared. And the appraised value of the manuscript of *Fifth Business* has unquestionably raised the bar for works of comparable significance.

WHILE THE TERM ACADEMIC essentially identifies a student of an academy or school it is used here to distinguish writers who studied writing at school from those who learned the craft by reading on their own. Schooled poets, it should be clear, do not all endorse the focality of myth in their work – the list on page 16 including: George Bowering among the Academics (whose work seems more remote from the 'myth-school' than from the Social Realist); and Gwendolyn MacEwen who fairly basked in myth, among the Unschooled heirs. This has, in part, arguably to do with the influence of the Contact movement on the academic curriculum (in the first case); and the mantic resurrection occasioned by the revised paperback edition of *The White Goddess* by Robert Graves – 1958: Vintage Books, New York; originally 1948: Faber & Faber, London – together with the somewhat mythic rise of 50s Canadian academic nationalism (in the second). The point, however, is that poetry of theory or precedent had begun to loosen the hold that Souster's Social Realist leanings held over the literary imagination of the early 50s, toward the end of the decade.

The purpose in making the distinction has less to do with a comparison of significance or effect than with a realization which seems to elude the majority of professional scribblers in Canada: that reward and recognition, in substance, fall disproportionately to degree and pedigree. Professors exercise an almost corporate monopoly over both publishing and funding institutions (their work in many cases undoubtedly warranting the recognition). *A st art,* in contrast, focuses on those unaffiliated individuals who stubbornly rejected every credential but credibility, only to wind up disenfranchised on the st.

A TRACE OF CANADIAN MODERN POETRY 1914–43

Open Water Arthur Stringer (1914) John Lane, New York
Laurentian Lyrics Arthur Bourinot (1915) Copp Clark
The Watchman L. M. Montgomery (1916) McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart
In a Belgian Garden F. O. Call (1917) Erskine MacDonald, London
Armageddon Goodridge MacDonald [1917]
Songs of Earth Ray Lewis (1917) Boni, New York
Rachel E. J. Pratt (1917) New York
Acanthus & Wild Grape F. O. Call (1920) McClelland & Stewart
Poems Arthur Bourinot (1921) T. H. Best Printing
Contrasts Lawren Harris (1922) McClelland & Stewart
Moonlight and Common Day Louise Morey Bowman (1922) Macmillan
Newfoundland Verse E. J. Pratt (1923) Ryerson
On a Grey Thread Elsa Gidlow (1923) Will Ransom, Chicago
Dream Tapestries Louise Morey Bowman (1924) Macmillan
A Far Land Martha Ostenso (1924) Seltzer, New York
The Witches' Brew E. J. Pratt (1925) Selwyn & Blount, London
Titans E. J. Pratt (1926) Macmillan
Songs of the Saguenay A. G. Bailey (1927) Québec
Wild Apples Charles Bruce (1927) Sackville, NB
Poems Oscar Pelham Edgar [1927]
The Iron Door E. J. Pratt (1927) Macmillan
Songs for Swift Feet Gostwick Roberts (1927) Ryerson
Absit Omen Kenneth McNeil Wells (1927) Black Manikin, Paris
Green Pitcher Dorothy Livesay (1928) Macmillan
Poems John Patrick Anderson (1929) London
Tao A. G. Bailey (1930) Ryerson
Monserrat W. E. Collin (1930) Ryerson
Verses of the Sea E. J. Pratt (1930) Macmillan
The Roosevelt and the Antinœ E. J. Pratt (1930) Macmillan
Laconics W. W. E. Ross (1930) Overbrook, Ottawa
From Alba Hill Elsa Gidlow (1931)
On this Side Nothing John Patrick Anderson [1932, London]
Tomorrow's Tide Charles Bruce (1932) Macmillan
Poems Laurence Dakin (1932) Obelisk, Paris
Signpost Dorothy Livesay (1932) Macmillan
Many Moods E. J. Pratt (1932) Macmillan
Sonnets W. W. E. Ross (1932) Heaton
The Wind in the Field Leo Cox (1932) Ryerson
The Dream of Abaris Laurence Dakin (1933) Obelisk, Paris
The Shrouding Leo Kennedy (1933) Macmillan
Village and Fields J. E. H. MacDonald (1933) Woodchuck, Thornhill
West by East J. E. H. MacDonald (1933) Ryerson
Windward Rock Kenneth Leslie (1934) Macmillan
Sonnets and Lyrics Laurence Dakin (1935) Obelisk, Paris
The Golden Chalice Ralph Gustafson (1935) Nicholson & Watson, London
Such a Din! Kenneth Leslie [1935] McCurdy, Halifax
Lowlands Low Kenneth Leslie (1935) McCurdy, Halifax
The Titanic E. J. Pratt (1935) Macmillan
Sorrows of the Hopeful Laurence Dakin (1936) London
New Provinces edited by F. R. Scott (1936) Macmillan
The Glowing Years Nathaniel Benson (1937) Nelson
River Without End Leo Cox (1937) Ryerson
Verses Grave and Gay Frederick Delafosse (1937) Peterborough
The Wild White Flame Briain na hEireann (1937) Cuala, Dublin
Alfred the Great Ralph Gustafson [1937] Joseph, London
Frozen Fire Floris McLaren (1937) Macmillan
The Fable of the Goats E. J. Pratt (1937) Macmillan
The Legend of Ghost Saloon Joseph Schull (1937) Macmillan
Characters in Cadence Louise Morey Bowman (1938) Macmillan
By Stubborn Stars Kenneth Leslie (1938) Ryerson
A Poet to this People Paul Potts (1938)
Viper's Bugloss John Smalacombe (1938) Ryerson
Six Poems George Woodcock (1938) Blue Moon, London
Solstice George Woodcock (1938) Blue Moon, London
Under the Sun Arthur Bourinot (1939) Macmillan
Consubstantial J. Patrick Byrne (1939) Cuala, Dublin
Fancy Free Carol Coates (1939) Ryerson
The Wind Our Enemy Anne Marriott (1939) Ryerson
Ballad of an Orphan Hand George Woodcock (1939) Blue Moon, London
Discovery Arthur Bourinot (1940) Ryerson
Hath Not a Jew A. M. Klein (1940) Behrman, New York
Brebeuf and His Brethren E. J. Pratt (1940) Macmillan
The White Island George Woodcock (1940) Fortune, London

What Far Kingdom Arthur Bourinot (1941) Ryerson
Personal Note Charles Bruce (1941) Ryerson
The Return Carol Coates (1941) Caronell
North Star Leo Cox (1941) Macmillan
Ebb Tide Doris Ferne (1941) Ryerson
Twelve Poems Nathan Ralph [Goldberg] (1941) Ryerson
Epithalamium in Time of War Ralph Gustafson (1941) New York
Calling Adventurers! Anne Marriott (1941) Ryerson
The Green Tree Padraig O Broin (1941) Gayfield, Dublin
Dunkirk E. J. Pratt (1941) Macmillan
Heroic Tales in Verse E. J. Pratt (1941) Macmillan
Yet a Little Onwards Bertram Warr [1941] Favil, London
David Earle Birney (1942) Ryerson
The Garden Is Political John Malcolm Brinnin (1942) Macmillan, New York
The Lincoln Years John Malcolm Brinnin (1942) New Directions, New York
Lyrics Unromantic Ralph Gustafson (1942) New York
Anthology of Canadian Poetry (English) edited by Ralph Gustafson (1942) Penguin, Harmondsworth
High Flight John Gillespie Magee (1942) Mills College, CA
Salt Marsh Anne Marriott (1942) Ryerson
Night Is Ended Joe Wallace (1942) Contemporary Publishers, Winnipeg
Prayer for Victory Richard Diespecker (1943) Woodward, Montreal
A Little Anthology of Canadian Poets edited by Ralph Gustafson (1943) New Directions, Norfolk, CT
Suibne Geilt Padraig O Broin (1943) Clo Cluain Tairbh
Still Life E. J. Pratt (1943) Macmillan
News of the Phœnix A. J. M. Smith (1943) Ryerson
The Book of Canadian Poetry: A Critical and Historical Anthology edited by A. J. M. Smith (1943) University of Chicago
The Centre Cannot Hold George Woodcock (1943) Routledge, Kegan, Paul, London

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